PERSONAS

Gain insight of the target group by creating or using personas.

	Participants		Design skill		Prior design experience
	Group		**Develop empathy**		**None to limited**

	Duration		Design step
	20 – 40 minutes		**Explore the problem**

Description

A persona is a lifelike description of a character, representing a user group. Participants will create one or more personas for their design project. There can be multiple types of users. Users have some similar attributes but can also differ from each other. Everyone is different, however, patterns between people can be recognized. For example, in a design project about sports there are people who always want to win and others who play just for fun.

For each type of user, participants create a realistic persona, not a caricature. A persona consists of:
- ► a name and age
- ► a photo or drawing
- ► background information (hobby, living situation, dreams, etc.)
- ► information, disires and needs of the persona that are related to the design theme
- ► a few striking details that bring the persona to life

In preparation, the participants collect information about real people. They think of people they know and what they know about them. They can observe them or interview them about experiences related to the subject of the design project. Alternatively, they look for information in magazines. Because a persona is based on real people, stereotypes are avoided. The aim is to present a real person on a deep and meaningful level.

Effect

Insights about a user group are brought to life in a persona. Personas help participants realize that everyone is different. This helps the participants to develop empathy for different users and helps them tailor their designs to the desires of the target group.

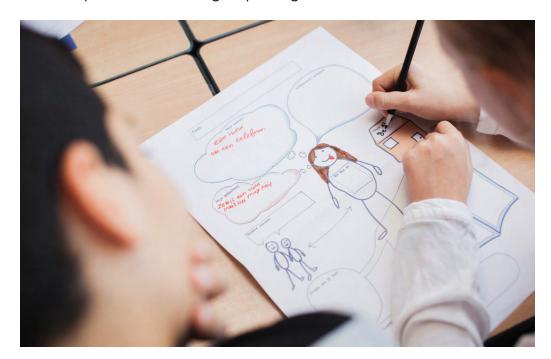*Without the Personas*   *With the Personas*

Example

In a Biomedical design project about elderly people with arthritis , the teacher mr. Lee shows a drawing of a grandma Elsie. He then says that Elsie is 76 years old and lives in a cosy little house on the edge of a large park. Every day she goes out and takes her dog Fifi for a walk in the park. Elsie has arthritis which gives her stiff and painful hands. She loves to read books, family novels and also the Harry Potter books. But now the pile of books from the library hasn't changed for a long time. Holding a book for a long time so she can read is no longer possible now that Elsie's hands are hurting more and more.

The participants empathise immensely with this persona 'grandma Elsie'. They think about what they can do to make sure Elsie can still read. Achmed designs a book chair with a special armrest for the book to rest on. Chantal opts for a rolling book stop . Fatima thinks that slicing potatoes is also difficult for Elsie so she comes up with a solution for that.

Step by step

1 Start with a design project then create relevant personas yourself so that participants become better acquainted with the personas. Have participants compare their own experiences with those of the persona.

2 In the subsequent design project, have participants collect information about the target group or provide them with this information.

3 Have the participants exchange and cluster their information. Tell them to look for differences and similarities between groups of users. They can also discover different user groups that are relevant to the design question.

4 Discuss the intended target groups and their characteristics. What would their concerns be?

5 Have participants choose up to three distinctive user groups and create a persona for each group using the Persona worksheet.

6 Display the personas on a visible spot in the room. Through the personas, the participants are aware of who they are designing for throughout the design process. They can refer back to the personas to test how good an idea is.

Tips

▶ Use the Persona worksheet and adjust the questions to the theme of the design project.

▶ Participants with design experience can create personas themselves, based on information they have collected about the target group. Show them some examples of personas with rich information for inspiration.

Materials

▶ Worksheet Persona (adapt the topics)

References

van Boeijen, A., Daalhuizen, J., van der Schoor, R., & Zijlstra, J. (2014). Delft Design Guide: Design Strategies and Methods. BIS Publishers, p95.

Klapwijk, R., & Van Doorn, F. (2015). Contextmapping in primary design and technology education: a fruitful method to develop empathy for and insight in user needs. International Journal of Technology and Design Education, 25(2), 151-167.

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MY HOME:

THINGS I DO:

I LIKE TO:

I HOPE THAT:

THIS IS ME!

FUN FACT ABOUT ME:

I STRUGGLE WITH:

DIARY/CALENDAR:

Worksheet persona   www.tudelft.nl/codesignkids

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